



Albuterol inhalers – Drug shortage

- On March 20, 2020, the [American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology announced](#) that certain areas of the country are experiencing shortages of albuterol inhalers.
 - The shortage will probably spread throughout the U.S., although it is not a production problem.
 - The shortage is occurring because of the increased use of albuterol inhalers in hospitals for COVID-19 and suspected COVID-19 patients to help with respiratory issues.
- There is a concern that nebulizers used on patients with COVID-19 in the hospital could spread the virus in the air. But the possible risk is to hospitalized patients with COVID-19 – not to patients using their nebulizer at home as directed.
- If a patient has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or suspect that he or she may have COVID-19 and are using a nebulizer at home, the virus may persist in droplets in the air for 1-2 hours. Therefore, nebulized albuterol should be administered in a location that minimizes exposure to household members who aren't infected.
 - Administer nebulized treatment in locations where air is not recirculated into the home such as a porch, patio, or garage. Choose areas where surfaces can be cleaned more easily or may not need cleaning.
- If patients and/or caregivers are experiencing trouble obtaining an albuterol inhaler from a pharmacy, the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology offers some practical advice such as checking if the inhaler still has medicine and contacting an allergist or healthcare provider for alternative therapies.
- OptumRx is actively monitoring drug shortages that may be related to COVID-19, evaluating the impact these shortages may have on members, and will communicate updates as soon as they are available.



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